

Introduction

Culture is an unavoidable part of every civilization which desire to leave its positive trace in human history. Consequently, art is integrated element of anthropology. We can not thoroughly understand mankind without analyzing creative achievements done by inspired individuals belonging to certain period of time and social stream. This unique craftsmanship can be divided into music (sound), motion (dance), theatre (live performance), cinematic (film, animation), literature (poetry and prose), visual expression (drawing and painting), material shaping (sculpturing, engraving), architecture and design.

I will start with poetry because I am much more familiar with writing skills than with other forms of art although I do practice them - in significantly less amount. Simply, there is no time for everything to be done at once.

It can be formulated like this: today I am a poet, tomorrow I will compose and dance.

Future is far away for those who endure in their noble quest art definitely is. A noble quest, a praiseworthy endeavour. A splendour of human thought display.

We can expand René Descartes' quote "I think, hence I am" with "I am, hence I must express myself... In the best possible way".

What is the difference between art and kitsch? Once you witness a kitsch it is enough. When you spectate an art you keep coming back over and over again with the same passion like the first time.

What is poetry?

Poetry is a distinctive form of the written expression (literature). It is characterized by a special text arrangement called verse. Main elements of each poem are meter, rhyme and intonation.

As Samuel Taylor Coleridge defined the two, prose is "words in their best order" while "poetry – the best words in their best order".

Person who writes poems is called a poet. To be considered a poet one must write at least enough poems to publish a collection. A single great poem could do as well.

History of poetry

Oldest recovered poem dates back to 4 thousand years BCE, Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh on which the story of Noah, Great Flood and Ark was presumably founded, followed by “Harper’s Song” (Song of the Weaver) from Egypt, originating around 2 thousand years BCE, and Rig Vedas, from 1500 - 1200 years BCE.

Sumerian Enheduanna is an earliest known poet (2300 years BCE).

The Chinese Classics is an oldest known poetry collection (11th - 7th century BCE).

Homer (12th or 8th century BCE) is attributed as being the author of an epic poems "Iliad" and "Odyssey", monuments of archaic Greek literature.

Sappho (630 – 570 BCE) was an early Greek poet from the island of Lesbos. Referred to as the "Tenth Muse" and "The Poetess", most of her poetry is lost.

"Beowulf" is a noteworthy, heroic poem of an Old English scripture produced by anonymous author around 8th century CE.

Dante Alighieri (1265. – 1321.) was an Italian writer. His Divine Comedy, illustrated by Sandro Botticelli, is considered to be a dual masterpiece: both textual and visually stunning.

Francesco Petrarca (1304. – 1374.), in English known as Petrarch, was a humanist and poet.

They two, Dante and Petrarca, could alone portray the start of Renaissance in Italy just like Sandro Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo Buonarroti and Raffaello (Raphael) do for the later part of this respective period.

Poetry in England

William Shakespeare (1564. – 1616.): along with more known plays, his work include sonnets as well. Term sonnet comes from the Latin word "sonus" meaning sound, via Italian word "sonetto" meaning "little song" and stands for a poem consisting of a fourteen lines obeying specific rhyme and structure.

John Milton (1606. – 1674.) was an English bard and philosopher. His famous epic "Paradise Lost" was written in unrhymed and extent manner depicting Milton`s own view of the Biblical "Adam and Eva" story.

Preceded by an Age of Enlightenment or an Age of Reason, thinking switch occurring in 17th and 18th, starting in Europe at the end of 18th - 19th century has brought Romantic age in Arts with poetry including names like William Woodsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John

Keats and Lord Byron. My voice trembles mentioning just this five gentleman solely due to an awe of reading their respective magnum opus.

My selection of romantic verses:

Lines Written in Early Spring

"To her fair works did Nature link

The human soul that through me ran

And much it grieved my heart to think

What man has made of man."

(William Wordsworth)

The Knight's Tomb

"By the side of a spring, on the breast of Helvellyn

Under the twigs of a young birch tree!

...The Knight's bones are dust

And his good sword rust,

His soul is with the saints - I trust."

(Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

The flower that smiles

"The flower that smiles today

Tomorrow dies

All that we wish to stay

Tempts and then flies.

What is this world`s delight?

Lightning that mocks the night,

Brief even as bright."

(Percy Bysshe Shelley)

Ode to a Nightingale

"O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been

Cool`d a long age in the deep-delved earth

Tasting of Flora and the country green

Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!"

(John Keats)

Darkness

"The waves were dead, the tides were in their grave,

The moon, their mistress, had expir`d before

The winds were wither`d in the stagnant air,

And the clouds perish'd.

Darkness had no need of aid from them

She was the Universe."

(Lord Byron)

One of the paramount cornerstones in Romantic literature is the sublime, theoretically connected to the Edmund Burke exposition published in 1757. "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful", meaning the use of exciting language and narrative that drives thoughts and emotions beyond usual, everyday experience, into a sort of an artistic orgasm, sometimes grotesque or even transcendent grandeur.

William Blake (1757. – 1827.) held a contrary opinion. Due to religious beliefs, his visionary imagination contradicted rationality and empiricism prone to the period in question. Baptised at St James's Church, Piccadilly, London, the Holy Scripture continued to be an incentive stimulus throughout Blake`s life. Beside poetry, he also made illustrations like found in his prophetic book Jerusalem (The Emanation of the Giant Albion) which is highly authentic, real theatre of words, true masterpiece of literature.

French poetry

Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud (1854. – 1891.) and Paul-Marie Verlaine (1844. – 1896.) were a French fellow poets known for their symbolic, transgressive and surreal artistic protest, accompanied with a decadent lifestyle, aimed against established poetry conventions.

United States

Edgar Allan Poe (1809. – 1849.) was an American poet whose work often related to the mystery and the macabre.

Walter Whitman Jr. (1819. – 1892.) was one of the most influential American authors.

I Sit And Look Out

"I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world

And upon all oppression and shame...

All these - all the meanness and agony without end,

I sitting, look out upon,

See, hear, and I am silent."

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson (1830. – 1886.) has post-mortem been regarded as one of the most important American poets.

Thomas S. Eliot (1888. – 1965.) was a poet and a critic who received an Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize in Literature. Born in USA but later changed his nationality to British.

Hollow Men

"We are the hollow men

We are the stuffed men

Leaning together

Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!

... Shape without form, shade without colour,

Paralysed force, gesture without motion...

Between the desire

And the spasm

Between the potency

And the existence

Between the essence

And the descent

Falls the Shadow...

This is the way the world ends

This is the way the world ends

This is the way the world ends

Not with a bang but a whimper."

Sylvia Plath (1932. - 1963.) was an American poet post-mortem awarded with a Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.

Henry Charles Bukowski (1920. - 1994.), alias Hank Chinaski, was an American writer humorously declared in 1986. by the Time magazine as being a "laureate of American lowlife" although I can not find original article just references. I laughed and laughed reading Bukowski`s stories. He wrote a script for the movie "Barfly" starring Mickey Rourke.

This citation from "Barfly" perfectly depicts Bukowski`s life philosophy:

Henry: "That's it."

Wanda: "That's what?"

Henry: "I'm broke. Can't buy another drink."

Wanda: "You mean you don't have any money?"

Henry: "No money, no job, no rent. Hey, I'm back to normal."

Cut while shaving

"I walked away from the mirror.

It was morning, it was afternoon, it was night.

Nothing changed

It was locked in place.

Something flashed, something broke, something remained.

I walked down the stairway and into it."

Maya Angelou (1928. - 2014.) was an American poet and civil rights activist.

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did but people will never forget how you made them feel."

In 1993. Angelou publicly recited her poem "On the Pulse of Morning", at the first inauguration of Bill Clinton, being the first poet to do it since Robert Frost in 1961.

On the Pulse of Morning

"Lift up your eyes upon

This day breaking for you.

Give birth again

To the dream."

Robert Lee Frost (1874. - 1963.) was an American poet. The only one who received four (4) Pulitzer Prizes in Poetry.

The Road Not Taken

"I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference."

Gwendolyn Elizabeth Brooks (1917. - 2000.) was an American poet, the first African American to receive a Pulitzer Prize. It was for writing a book of poetry "Annie Allen".

Irish lyrics

Oscar Wilde (1854. - 1900.) was an Irish writer. He wrote famous novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray" but was even more known for his plays like "The Importance of Being Earnest" and controversies such as with "Salomé", at the time, prohibited in England or his decadent lifestyle which led him to die at age 46.

James A. A. Joyce (1882. - 1941.) was an Irish avant-garde author. His novel "Ulysses" holds prestige status among 20th century literature.

William B. Yeats (1865. - 1939.) was an Irish poet and politician who received 1923. the Nobel Prize in Literature. As a prominent figure of Irish Literary Revival, he helped establish the Abbey theatre, National Theatre of Ireland, where his plays were staged.

Chile

Pablo Neruda (1904. -1973.), Ricardo Eliécer Neftalí Reyes Basoalto, was a Chilean writer who 1971. won the Nobel Prize in Literature. His social manifestos and left political views led to his alleged assassination done by Augusto Pinochet "military junta" regime.

Gautama Christ

"What we came across in these blood thirsty times

With their smoke of burning trash, their dead ashes,

As we weren't able to stop looking

We often stopped to look at the names of God

We lifted them with tenderness because they reminded us

Of our ancestors, of the first people, those who said the prayers,

Those who discovered the hymn that united them in misfortune

And now seeing the empty fragments which sheltered those ancient people

We feel those smooth substances,

Worn out and used up by good and by evil."

Croatian poetry circle includes names such as Antun Branko Šimić, Antun

Gustav Matoš, Antun Mihanović, Dragutin Domjanić, Fran Galović, Ivan Goran Kovačić, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, Marko Marulić, Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević, Vladimir Nazor and Tin Ujević.

My favourite poems are "Rosa Blanca", "Bella Ciao" and "Misty Mountains".

1) Rosa Blanca

Author: José Julián Martí Pérez (1853. - 1895.), un hombre sincero, born in Havana, Cuba.

Collection: "Versos sencillos" 1891.

"Cultivo una rosa blanca

En junio como en enero

Para el amigo sincero

Que me da su mano franca.

Y para el cruel que me arranca

El corazón con que vivo:

Cardo ni ortiga cultivo,

Cultivo la rosa blanca."

English translation (my own):

"I cultivate a single white rose

In June as well as in January

For a sincere friend

Who bestows me his honest hand.

And for the cruel who tears apart

The Heart that keeps me living

Neither thistle nor nettle I cultivate

I cultivate a white rose."

2) Bella Ciao

Bella Ciao was, originally, 19th century paddy workers protest song but later

altered to fit the needs of Italian resistance movement, the partisans, who fought against Hitler and Mussolini. It was used as a theme song in tv serie "La Casa de Papel / Money Heist" (2017. - 2021.) and is one of my favourites due to an intense emotions encompassing it.

"Una mattina mi sono alzato

O bella ciao, bella ciao,

Una mattina mi sono alzato

E ho trovato l'invasor

O partigiano portami via

O bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao

O partigiano portami via

Che mi sento di morire

E se io muoio da partigiano

O bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao

E se io muoio da partigiano

Tu mi devi seppellir

E seppellire lassù in montagna

O bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao

E seppellire lassù in montagna

Sotto l'ombra di un bel fior

E le genti che passeranno

O bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao

E le genti che passeranno

Mi diranno che bel fior

E le genti che passeranno

Mi diranno che bel fior

x2

E quest'è il fiore del partigiano

O bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao ciao ciao

E quest'è il fiore del partigiano

Morto per la libertà!"

English translation (my own with artistic liberty of slight modification for the sole purpose of improving the respective content):

"One morning I woke up

Beautiful hello, beautiful hello

One morning I woke up

And I had seen the invader.

To partisans I join

O beautiful hello, beautiful hello, beautiful hello hello hello

With partisans I march

Ready to die for the noble cause.

If I die as a partisan

O beautiful hello, beautiful hello, beautiful hello hello hello

If I die as a partisan

Bury me yourself.

Bury high in the mountains

O beautiful hello, beautiful hello, beautiful hello hello hello

Bury high in the mountains

Under a shade of the beautiful flower.

Ladies and gentlemen passing by

O beautiful hello, beautiful hello, beautiful hello hello hello

Ladies and gentlemen passing by

Will admire how a beautiful flower

Ladies and gentlemen passing by

Will admire how a beautiful flower.

x2

It is the flower of a partisan

O beautiful hello, beautiful hello, beautiful hello hello hello

It is the flower of a partisan

Died for the liberty!"

3) Misty Mountains (dwarf song)

Author: J. R. R. Tolkien (1892. - 1973.), an English writer and language expert, who created famous trilogies the "Hobbit" and the "Lord of the Rings", translated "Beowulf" and received an Order of chivalry appointed to him by Queen Elizabeth II.

Short version (Hobbit):

"Far over the Misty Mountains cold

To dungeons deep and caverns old.

We must away, at break of day,

To find our long forgotten gold.

The pines were roaring on the height,

The winds were moaning in the night,

The fire was red, it flaming spread,

The trees like torches blazed with light.

We must away! We must away!

We ride before the break of day!"

Great movie about poetry is Dead Poets Society (Peter Weir, 1989.) with Robin Williams in main role of preparatory school language and literature professor John Keating. The name is not original because it too much

resembles John Keats but it could express movie makers personal choice.

Interesting part is theoretical review made by, fictional, Dr. J. Evans Pritchard PhD titled "Understanding poetry". I found books online with same name but different authors and I found Sir Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, social anthropologist at the University of Oxford from 1946. to 1970. I didn't find exact work referred to in the movie but some sources pointed to the Laurence Dollins Perrine book "Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry".

An underlying idea is to evaluate poetry by using mathematical means. If we present a certain poem graphically, with two vectors determined as perfection and importance, then we can calculate the square surface and correspondently attribute related worth.

I think it is a very useful technical tool which has it place when we approach poetry in strictly scientific terms. Of course, art is much more than that. Art, as many authors have shown, often voyage outside the frame and into the wild. It is called poetic liberty. Actually, it is what art is all about: to explore the new frontiers of human expression. Every new art style departed from an existing setting(s) or even contradicted those established before.